TASK ALLOCATION

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Picking the right person for the right job is essential in getting things done. Leaders need to select the right people for the right jobs, and assign them tasks that fit with their skills and capabilities. This provides structure.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ALLOCATE TASKS

To field a match-winning team, first you need to understand the game that has to be played and the skills and abilities required to play it: There's no point asking a football team to play baseball if you want to win at the top level.

Then you have to place the correct player in the correct position. Mere common sense, you would think – but then, as the old quip goes, "common sense is often quite uncommon".

THE BALM METHOD

The BALM method has four steps to achieve correct role allocation. These steps are:

- Break down the broader team goals into specific, individual tasks. List all tasks, and then rank each task in terms of importance;
- Analyze and list the competencies required to perform each task;
- List the competencies of each team member;
- Match individuals to task competencies.

This is great as a starting point, but in the real world you'll most-likely find lots of overlaps and lots of gaps.

OVERLAPS AND GAPS

Where you have overlaps, you have two choices: Either allotting better qualified individuals to more important tasks, or allocating the task to the person at the lowest organizational level who is qualified to do the job. Both approaches have their virtues. One allows you to do the job with a higher level of certainty; the other allows you to do it more efficiently and at a lower cost.

Where you have a gap, you may need to train existing team members, or recruit to fill the gap. Often, training is the best option. Not only is it usually cheaper, you also know more about the individual's talents and working methods. On the downside, a newly trained person usually has plenty of theory, but lacks the experience.

Recruitment often takes a very long time and can be very expensive. It is also risky: Even using the best interviewing and testing methods, it's possible for candidates to cover up failings that only become obvious once someone's been in a role for several months.

COMMUNICATING TASK ALLOCATIONS TO YOUR TEAM

A hint to remember is that no member of your team should be thinking:

- What are we here for?
- What are we supposed to do?
- What part can I play?

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"never underestimate the value of team spirit, motivation and hard work". (This advice usually also concludes "And never over-estimate people's knowledge and understanding".)

Tip 3

However if someone is letting the team down, you need to be active in managing this. Non-performers set a poor example to the team, and block performance of activities that are essential for success.

Tip 4

Keep your team lean, but make sure you have back-ups or substitutes for key roles. It is important to have 'a few good people' rather than have 'too many people'. But remember to have back-ups in case you lose key people.

Tip 5

Research shows that diverse teams can be more successful than teams with a very similar background. People in diverse teams bring different experiences, are less prone to "group-think" and tend to suffer less from the conflicts that can arise when similar people work together.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

NON-PERFORMERS

Make sure that you talk to the person who is failing to perform to make them aware of the situation. And make sure that you quickly understand and remove any blocks on performance. Give a controlled number of short but fair opportunities to perform as required (being "hard nosed" about this, correcting a situation bears results much more quickly than recruiting new team members). However, if performance doesn't improve to satisfactory levels, then the non-performer needs to be moved off the team.

BRIEFING YOUR TEAM

Having decided which team member will fill each role, you will have to make sure you communicate the decision to your team. This allows team members to support each other and make sure their work is aligned.

Each team member should know his or her position within the team. The roles of each person should be clearly defined, with individual responsibilities, authority and accountability clearly spelled out. It's often best to do this in writing.

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